

# UNSEEN DRAMA SHAKESPEAREAN

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## WHAT IS UNSEEN DRAMA?

- In the unseen drama section, you have to answer questions on an extract from a play that you have not studied.
- Don't worry if you don't understand every single word: there will be a glossary giving the meanings of any words that are vital to the understanding of the piece.
- Remember, every new scene in your studied Shakespeare text is an example of unseen drama!



## WHAT MIGHT YOU BE ASKED?

- Multiple choice questions showing your basic understanding of the piece
- Staging and setting
- Understanding of character
- Dramatic techniques

## COMMONLY USED WORDS

Fain – gladly

Anon – soon

Straight – immediately

Marry – by Mary (a very mild oath)

Hark – listen

Mark – take note

## MORE COMMONLY USED WORDS

- Art: Are
- Dost: Do
- Doth: Does
- Retire: Retreat or retire for the evening/go to bed
- Want: Lack
- Base: Lowly, unworthy, illegitimate
- Thither: Towards there
- Hither: Towards here



## COMMONLY USED PRONOUNS

Thou: You

Thee: You

Ye: You

Thine: Yours

Thy: Your

Thyself: Yourself


# DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES

You have discussed these while analysing your studied drama.

Familiarise yourself with the dramatic techniques used in Shakespearean drama.

# PROLOGUE

An introduction, often in verse, which establishes the context and gives the audience an idea of what will happen in the play



The prologue at the start of *Romeo and Juliet* tells us about the feud between the Capulets and the Montagues and informs us that peace will only be brought about by the deaths of the 'star-crossed lovers'.



# ASIDE

A short comment delivered directly to the audience or presented as the character speaking their thoughts aloud

Spoken in an undertone

Meant to be heard by the audience but not the other characters onstage

Gives the audience a perspective unavailable to the other characters onstage

Can be humorous

Always a reflection of the character's true feelings, even if they are mistaken



## EXAMPLE FROM THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

BASSANIO This is Signior Antonio.

SHYLOCK, [*aside*]

How like a fawning publican he looks!

I hate him for he is a Christian,

But more for that in low simplicity

He lends out money gratis and brings down

The rate of usance here with us in Venice.

If I can catch him once upon the hip,

I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.



## COMMENT

In the previous example, Shakespeare uses an **aside** to allow the audience an insight into Shylock's real view of Antonio. We now know that Shylock despises Antonio for his religion and his lending of money interest-free. Shylock hopes for an opportunity to act on his hatred.



## BLANK VERSE – IAMBIC PENTAMETER

- Blank verse simply means that the lines are unrhymed.
- There is a strict rhythm (iambic pentameter) but no rhyme.



BLANK VERSE -  
IAMBIC  
PENTAMETER

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Much of Shakespearean drama is written in iambic pentameter.

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Ten syllables in each line

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An **iamb** is an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. **Pentameter** means that the iamb is repeated five times.

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'In sooth I know not why I am so sad  
It wearies me, you say it wearies you.  
(Antonio's first lines in the play).

## WHO DOES NOT SPEAK IN IAMBIC PENTAMETER?

- **Prose** is used to show low-status characters or disordered thoughts in high-status characters.
- **Servingman: Gentlemen, my master Antonio is at his house and desires to speak with you both.**
- In the example above, the servant is not of sufficiently high social standing to speak as the principal characters do.



A large wooden sailing ship with white sails is shown on the ocean. The ship is viewed from a low angle, emphasizing its size. The sails are partially unfurled, and the ship is moving through the water. The sky is a deep blue, and the water is dark. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

## RHYMING COUPLET

- Two lines of rhyming iambic pentameter
- Often used at the end of a character's speech to provide a neat conclusion
- 'Come on, in this there can be no dismay,  
My ships come home a month before the day.'
- Antonio's words neatly end Act I Scene 3.



# SOLILOQUY

- A character is alone on stage and expresses his or her thoughts
- Soliloquies are an important way for us to gain an insight into a character's real ideas/motives/dissatisfaction etc.
- Traditionally, characters tell the truth in soliloquies
- Playwrights are more limited than novelists in that they cannot share the characters' thoughts with us easily
- Too many soliloquies can become tedious



# DRAMATIC IRONY

- When the audience knows more than the characters on stage and therefore sees the significance in a character's words or deeds that the character does not recognise.
- In Act 4, Scene 1, Portia disguises herself as Balthazar but – apart from Nerissa – the other characters are not aware of her true identity. This leads to an amusing moment in the play (see next slide).



## DRAMATIC IRONY

BASSANIO: Antonio, I am married to a wife  
Which is as dear to me as life itself,  
But life itself, my wife, and all the world  
Are not with me esteemed above thy life.  
I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all  
Here to this devil, to deliver you.

PORTIA: [*aside*] Your wife would give you little thanks for that  
If she were by to hear you make the offer.

# STAGING A SCENE

Unseen and Studied Drama

## STAGING A SCENE

- This is a commonly-asked question so you should be prepared for it.
- You may be given guidelines as to how many aspects of staging to include or which aspects you must include.
- As always, read the question carefully.

# IMPORTANT

You must support every choice you make by reference to and/or quotation from the text.



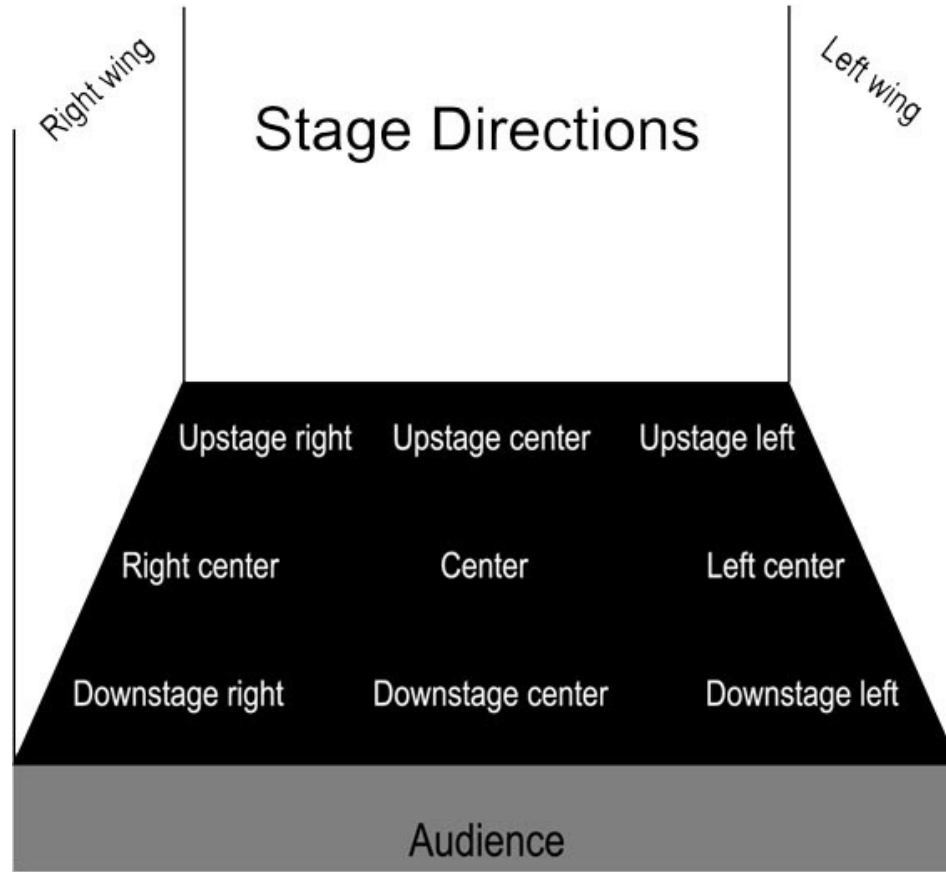
# SET

- Does not need to be elaborate
- Simple backdrop
- A few pieces of furniture
- A prop or two



# STAGE POSITIONING

- Powerful character in a position of dominance?
- Isolated character standing alone?
- Would you have a tiered stage with a dominant character in a higher position than the other?







## COSTUMES AND MAKE-UP

- Colours can be very suggestive here.
- Red - passion or anger
- White - purity or innocence
- Black - evil or power
- Yellow or greenish tinge - sinister and evil



DETAILS!

- Use plenty of adjectives to describe the costumes.
- Torn, dishevelled, sleek, expensive, elegant, flowing, tightly-fitted, bloody etc.
- You could link characters by having them wear similar or complementary colours.

## POSTURE, MOVEMENT, VOICE

- Standing proudly upright?
- Bent in humble submission?
- Exaggerated gestures?
- Whispering and creeping around the stage?
- Support every point you make with quotation from and reference to the play.



## FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

- Can tell us a lot about a character's true feelings
- Smiling cruelly?
- Mouth in a hard line?
- Frowning?
- Smirking?
- Smiling warmly?
- Etc.

# SOUND EFFECTS



- Music - could be romantic, sorrowful, dramatic etc.
- Choice of music shows you understand the mood
- Swords clashing
- Screaming
- Murmur of angry voices
- Etc.



## LIGHTING

- Can establish mood / atmosphere
- Spotlights to pick out important characters
- Filters to create warm, glowing light
- Dim light to create menacing or eerie atmosphere